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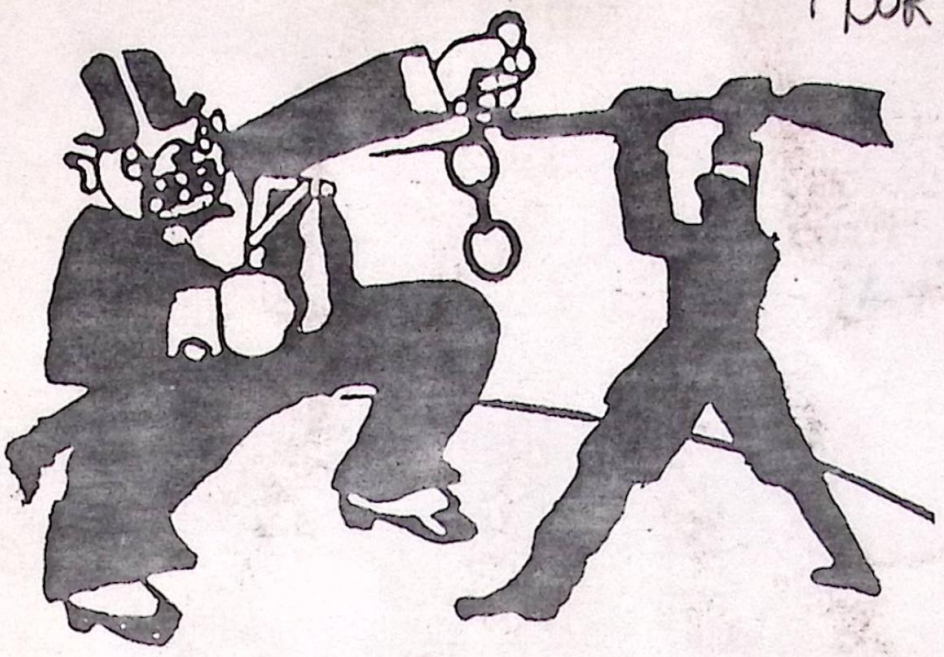

ALEXANDER BERKMAN

an anarchist introduction to

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION.

VIRUS

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

ALEXANDER

BERKMAN

This short pamphlet is taken from the first part of the book "What is Anarchist Communism?" which was first published in 1929.The latter part of the book has frequently been republished as "The ABC of Anarchism by the Freedom Press.

We are republishing this part of the book as we feel that there is a need in the Anarchist movement for a brief introduction from a libertarian stand - point to the most important revolution in the twentieth century.

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THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

In Russia the Bolsheviki, known as the Communist Party, are in control of the government. The Revolution of October, 1917, put them in power.*

That Revolution was the most important event in the world since the French Revolution in 1789-1793. It was even greater than the latter, because it went much deeper to the rock bottom of society. The French Revolution sought to establish political freedom and equality, believing that it would thereby also secure brotherhood and welfare for all. It was a mighty step in advance on the road of progress and it ultimately changed the entire political face of Europe. It abolished the monarchy in France, established a republic, and gave the death blow to feudalism, to the absolute rule of the church and the nobility. It influenced every country on the Continent along progressive lines, and helped to further democratic sentiment throughout Europe.

But fundamentally it altered nothing. It was a *political* revolution, to secure political rights and liberties. It did secure them. France is a "democracy" to-day and the motto, "Liberty, Brotherhood, Equality," is written even on every prison building. But it did not free man from exploitation and oppression; and that is, after all, the thing which is needed most.

The French Revolution put the middle classes, the bourgeoisie, into the government, in place of the aristocracy and nobility. It gave certain constitutional rights to the farmer and worker, who until then were mere serfs. But the power

* According to the old Russian calendar, in November.

of the bourgeoisie, its industrial mastery, made the farmer its abject dependent and turned the city worker into a wage slave.

It could not be otherwise, because liberty is an empty sound as long as you are kept in bondage economically. As I have pointed out before, freedom means that you have the *right* to do a certain thing; but if you have no *opportunity* to do it, that right is sheer mockery. The opportunity lies in your economic condition, whatever the political situation may be. No political rights can be of the least use to the man who is compelled to slave all his life to keep himself and family from starvation.

Great as the French Revolution was as a step toward emancipation from the despotism of king and noble, it could accomplish nothing for the *real* freedom of man because it did not secure for him economic opportunity and independence.

It is for that reason that the Russian Revolution was a far more significant event than all the previous upheavals. It not only abolished the Tsar and his absolute sway; it did something more important: it destroyed the *economic* power of the possessing classes, of the land barons and industrial kings. For that reason it is the greatest happening in all history, the first and only time that such a thing has been tried.

This could not have been done by the French Revolution, because the people then still believed that political emancipation would be enough to make men free and equal. They did not realize that the basis of all liberty is economic. But that is by no means to the discredit of the French Revolution; the times were not ripe for a fundamental economic change.

Coming a hundred and twenty-eight years later, the Russian Revolution was more enlightened. It went to the root of the trouble. It knew that no political freedom would do any good unless the peasants got the soil and the workers the factories in their possession, so that they should not remain

at the mercy of the land monopolists and the capitalistic owners of the industries.

Of course, the Russian Revolution did not accomplish this great work over night. Revolutions, like everything else, grow: they begin small, accumulate strength, develop, and broaden.

It was during the war that the Russian Revolution started, because of the dissatisfaction of the people at home and the army at the front. The country was tired of fighting; it was worn out by hunger and misery. The soldiers had had enough of slaughter; they began to ask why they must kill or be killed—and when soldiers begin asking questions, no war can continue much longer.

The despotism and corruption of the Tsarist government added oil to the fire. The court had become a public scandal, with the priest Rasputin debauching the Empress and through his influence over her and the Tsar controlling the affairs of State. Intrigues, bribery, and every form of venality were rampant. The army funds were stolen by high officials, and the soldiers were often forced to go into battle without enough ammunition and supplies. Their boots were paper-soled, and many had no footgear at all. Some regiments revolted; others refused to fight. More and more frequently the soldiers fraternized with the "enemy"—young men like themselves, who had the misfortune of being born in a different country; and who, like the Russians, had been ordered to war without knowing why they must shoot or be shot. Great numbers dropped their guns and returned home. There they told the folks about the fearful conditions at the front, the useless carnage, the wretchedness, and disaster. That helped to increase the discontent of the masses, and presently voices began to be heard against the Tsar and his régime.

Day by day this sentiment grew; it was fanned into flame by increased taxes and great want, by the shortage of food and provisions.

In February, 1917, the Revolution broke out. As usual in such cases, the powers that be were stricken with blindness.

The autocrat and his ministers, the aristocrats and their advisers all believed that it was just a matter of some street disorders, of strikes, and bread riots. They imagined themselves safe in the saddle. But the "disorder" continued, spreading over the entire country, and presently the Tsar saw himself forced to quit the throne. Before long the once mighty monarch was arrested and exiled to Siberia, where he himself had formerly sent thousands to their death, and where he and his whole family later met their doom.* The Russian autocracy was abolished. The February Revolution against the most powerful government in Europe was accomplished almost without firing a gun.

"How could it be done so easily?" you wonder.

The Romanov régime was an absolutism; Russia under the Tsars was the most enslaved country in Europe. The people practically had no rights. The whim of the autocrat was supreme, the order of the police the highest law. The masses lived in poverty and suffered the greatest oppression. They longed for freedom.

For over a hundred years libertarians and revolutionists in Russia worked to undermine the régime of tyranny, to enlighten the people and rouse them to rebellion against their subjection. The history of that movement is replete with the consecration and devotion of the finest men and women. Thousands, even hundreds of thousands of them, lined the road of Golgotha, filling the prisons, tortured and done to death in the frozen wilds of Siberia. Beginning with the Decembrist attempt to secure a constitution, over a hundred years ago, all through the century, the fires of liberty were kept burning by the heroic self-sacrifice of the nihilists and revolutionists. The story of that great martyrdom has no equal in the annals of man.

Apparently it was a losing struggle, for the complete denial of freedom made it practically impossible for the pioneers of liberty to reach the people, to enlighten the masses. Tsardom was well protected by its numerous police and secret service,

* Executed by the Bolsheviki in Ekaterinburg, Siberia, in 1918.

as well as by the official church, press, and school which trained the people in abject servility to the Tsar and unquestioning obedience to "law and order." Dire punishment was visited upon anyone daring to voice a liberal sentiment; the most severe laws punished even the attempt to teach the peasants to read and write. The government, the nobility, the clergy, and the bourgeoisie all combined, as usual, to stamp out and crush the least effort to enlighten the masses. Deprived of every means of spreading their ideas, the liberal elements in Russia were driven to the necessity of employing violence against the barbarous tyranny, of resorting to acts of terror in order by such means to mitigate, even to a small extent, the rule of despotism, and at the same time to compel the attention of their country and of the world at large to the unbearable conditions. It was this tragic necessity that gave rise in Russia to terroristic activities, turning idealists, to whom human life was sacred, into executioners of tyrants. Nature's noblemen they were, those men and women who willingly, even eagerly, gave their lives to lift the fearful yoke from the people. Like bright stars on the firmament of the age-long warfare between oppression and liberty stand out the names of Sophie Perovskaya, Kibaltchitch, Grinevitsky, Sasonov, and countless other martyrs, known and unknown, of darkest Russia.

It was a most uneven struggle, apparently a hopeless fight. For the revolutionists were but a handful as against the almost limitless power of Tsardom with its large armies, numerous police, special bureaus of political spies, its notorious Third Department, the secret *Okhrana*, its universal system of house janitors as police aids, and with all the other great resources of a vast country of over a hundred million population.

A losing fight. And yet, the splendid idealism of the Russian youth—particularly of the student element—their unquenchable enthusiasm and devotion to liberty were not in vain. The people came out the victor, as they ultimately always do in the struggle of light against darkness. What a lesson to the world, what encouragement to the weak in

spirit, what hope it holds for the further never-ceasing advance of mankind in spite of all tyranny and persecution!

In 1905 broke out the first revolution in Russia. Still strong was the autocracy, and the uprising of the masses was crushed, though not without its having compelled the Tsar to grant certain constitutional rights. But fearfully did the government avenge even those small concessions. Hundreds of revolutionists paid for them with their lives, thousands were imprisoned, and many other thousands doomed to Siberia.

Again despotism drew a fresh breath and felt itself secure against the people. But not for long. The hunger for liberty may be suppressed for a time; yet never exterminated. Man's natural instinct is for freedom, and no power on earth can succeed in crushing it for very long.

Twelve years later—a very short time in the life of a people—came another revolution, that of February, 1917. It proved that the spirit of 1905 was not dead, that the price paid for it in human lives had not been in vain. Truly has it been said that the blood of the martyrs nourishes the tree of liberty. The work and self-sacrifice of the revolutionists had borne fruit. Russia had learned much from past experience, as succeeding events proved.

The people had learned. In 1905 they had demanded only some mitigation of the despotism, some small political liberties; now they demanded the complete abolition of the tyrannical rule.

The February Revolution sounded the death-knell of Tsardom. It was the least bloody revolution in all history. As I have explained before, the power of even the strongest government evaporates like smoke the moment the people refuse to acknowledge its authority, to bow to it, and withhold their support. The Romanov régime was conquered almost without a fight,—naturally enough, since the entire people had become tired of its rule and had decided that it was harmful and unnecessary, and that the country would be better off without it. The ceaseless agitation and educational work carried on by the revolutionary elements (the Socialists

of various groups, including the Anarchists) had taught the masses to understand that Tsardom must be done away with. So widespread had this sentiment become that even the army —the most unenlightened group in Russia, as in every land— had lost faith in the existing conditions. The people had *outgrown* the despotism, had freed themselves in mind and spirit from it, and thereby gained the strength and possibility of freeing themselves actually, physically.

That is why the all-powerful autocrat could find no more support in Russia; no, not even a single regiment to protect him. The mightiest government in Europe broke down like a house of cards.

A temporary, Provisional Government, took the place of the Tsar. Russia was free.

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BETWEEN FEBRUARY AND OCTOBER

I REMEMBER attending a very large mass-meeting in Madison Square Garden, New York, called to celebrate the dethronement of the Tsar. The huge hall was crowded with twenty thousand people wrought up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. "Russia is free!" the leading speaker began. A veritable hurricane of applause, shouts, and hurrahs greeted the declaration. It continued for many minutes, breaking out again and again. But when the audience became quiet and the orator was about to proceed, there came a voice from the crowd:

"Free for what?"

There was no reply. The speaker continued his harangue.

The Russians are a simple and naïve people. Never having had any constitutional rights, they had no interest in politics and were not corrupted by it. They knew little of congresses and parliaments, and cared less about them.

"Free for what?" they wondered.

"You are free from the Tsar and his tyranny," they were told.

That was very fine, they thought. "But how about the war?" the soldier asked. "How about the land?" the peasant demanded. "How about a decent existence?" the proletarian urged. You see, my friend, those Russians were so "uneducated" they were not satisfied just to be free *from* something; they wanted to be free *for* something, free *to do* what they wanted. And what they wanted was a chance to live, to work and enjoy the fruits of their labor. That is, they wanted access to the land, so they could raise food for themselves; access to the mines, shops, and factories, so as to pro-

duce what they needed. But under the Provisional Government, just as under the Romanovs, those things belonged to the wealthy; they remained "private property."

As I say, the simple Russian knew nothing about politics, but he knew exactly what he wanted. He lost no time in making his wants known, and he was determined to get them. The soldiers and sailors chose spokesmen from their own midst to present to the Provisional Government their demand to terminate the war. Their representatives organized themselves as soldiers' councils, called *soviets* in Russia. The peasants and the city workers did the same. In this manner every branch of the army and navy, every agricultural and industrial district, every factory even, established its own soviets. In the course of time the various soviets formed the All-Russian Soviet of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies, which held its sessions in Petrograd.

Through the Soviets the people presently began to voice their demands.

The Provisional Government, the new "liberal" régime under the leadership of Miliukov, paid no attention. It is characteristic of all political parties alike that, once in power, they turn a deaf ear to the needs and wants of the masses. The Provisional Government was no different in this than the Tsarist autocracy. It failed to understand the spirit of the time, and it stupidly believed that a few minor reforms would satisfy the country. It kept busy talking and discussing, proposing new bills and enacting more legislation. But it was not laws the people wanted. They wanted peace, while the government insisted on continuing the war. They cried for land and bread, but what they got was more laws.

If history teaches anything at all its clearest lesson is that you can't defy or resist the will of a whole people. You can suppress it for a while, stem the tide of popular protest, but the more violently will the storm rage when it comes. Then it will break down every obstacle, sweep away all opposition, and its momentum will carry it even further than its original intention.

That has been the story of every great conflict, of every revolution.

Recall the American War for Independence, for instance. The rebellion of the colonies against Great Britain began with the refusal to pay the tea tax exacted by the Government of George III. The comparatively unimportant objection to "taxation without representation," meeting with the King's opposition, resulted in war and ended in completely freeing the American colonies from English rule. Thus was born the Republic of the United States.

The French Revolution similarly began with the demand for small improvements and reforms. The refusal of Louis XVI to lend ear to the popular voice cost him not only his throne but also his head, and brought about the destruction of the entire feudal system in France.

Just so did Tsar Nicholas II believe that a few insignificant concessions would stop the revolution. He also paid for his stupidity with his crown and life. The same fate overtook the Provisional Government. That is why a wise man said that "history repeats itself." It always does with government.

The Provisional Government consisted mostly of conservative men who did not understand the people and who were far removed from their needs. The masses demanded peace first of all. The Provisional Government, under the leadership of Miliukov and later under Kerensky, was determined to continue the war even in the face of the general dissatisfaction and the serious breakdown of the industrial and economic life of the country. The rising waves of the Revolution were soon to sweep it away: the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was preparing to take matters into its own hands.

Meanwhile the people did not wait. The soldiers at the front had already themselves decided to quit the war as unnecessary and useless slaughter. By the hundred thousands they were leaving the fields of battle and returning home to their farms and factories. There they began carrying into

effect the real objects of the Revolution. For to them the Revolution did not mean printed constitutions and paper rights, but the land and the workshop. Between June and October, 1917, while the Provisional Government kept on endlessly discussing "reforms," the peasants started confiscating the estates of the large landholders and the workers took possession of the industries.

This was called *expropriating* the capitalist class: that is, depriving the masters of the things they had no right to monopolize, the things they had appropriated from the laboring classes, from the people.

In this manner the soil was expropriated from the landlords, the mines and mills from their "owners," the warehouses from the speculators. The workers and farmers took everything in charge through their labor unions and agrarian organizations.

The "liberal" Government of Miliukov had insisted on keeping up the war because the Allies wanted it. The "revolutionary" Government of Kerensky also remained deaf to the popular demands. It passed drastic laws against the "unauthorized" taking of land by the peasantry. Kerensky did everything in his power to keep the army at the front and even reintroduced the death penalty for "desertion." But the people now ignored the government.

The situation again proved that the real power of a country lies in the hands of the masses, of those who fight, toil, and produce, and not in any parliament or government. Kerensky at one time was the adored idol of Russia, more powerful than any Tsar. Yet his authority was lost, his government fell, and he himself had to flee for his life when the people realized that he was not serving their cause. While he was still the head of the Provisional Government, the actual power began to go over to the Petrograd Soviet, most of whose members were revolutionary workers, peasants, and soldiers.

Various and even opposing views were represented in the Soviet, as is inevitable in bodies composed of different classes

of the population with their particular interests. But the greatest influence under such circumstances is always exerted by those who voice the deepest feelings and needs of the people. Therefore, the more revolutionary elements in the Soviet gradually gained the mastery, for they expressed the true wants and aspirations of the masses.

There were those in the Soviet who held that a constitution, something like that of the United States, was all that Russia needed to attain freedom and well-being. They asserted that capitalism was all right: there must be masters and servants, rich and poor; the people should be satisfied with the rights and liberties which a democratic government would grant them. These were the Constitutional Democrats, called for short *Cadets* in Russia. They quickly lost their influence, because the "naïve" Russian workers and peasants knew that it was not rights and liberties on paper they wanted, but a chance to work and enjoy the fruits of their labor. They pointed to America with its Constitution and Declaration of Independence, and said that they did not care for the injustice, corruption, and wage slavery which constitutionally existed in that country.

The next more liberal element were the Social Democrats, known as Mensheviki. As Socialists they believed in the abolition of capitalism, but they declared that the Revolution was not the time to do it. Why not? Because it was not a proletarian revolution, they claimed, even if it looked like one. They maintained that it could not be a social revolution and therefore it should not alter the fundamental economic conditions of the country. According to them it was only a bourgeois revolution, a political one, and as such it should make only political changes. It could not be anything more than a bourgeois revolution, the Mensheviki argued, because had not the great Karl Marx taught that a proletarian revolution could take place only in a country where capitalism had reached its highest stage of development? Russia was very backward industrially, and therefore it would be against the teachings of Marx to consider the Revolution

proletarian. For that reason capitalism must remain in Russia and be given a chance to ripen before the people could think of abolishing wage slavery.

The Social Democrats had a large following among the workers of Russia, many labor unions being Menshevik. But the argument that the Revolution was not proletarian only because Marx had fifty years before said that it couldn't be, did not appeal to the toilers. They had made the Revolution, they had fought and bled for it. They had driven out the Tsar and his clique, and they were now driving out their industrial masters, thus abolishing wage slavery and capitalism. They could not see why they could not do what they were actually doing only because some one who was dead long ago had believed that it couldn't be done. The reasoning of the Socialist leaders was too "scientific" for them. Their common sense told them that it was pure nonsense, and the Mensheviki lost most of their following among the workers.

Another political party was called Socialists Revolutionists. To this party belonged many of the terrorists who had been active against Tsardom in the past. The Socialists Revolutionists had numerous adherents, mainly among the farming population. But they alienated them by taking a stand for the continuation of the war when the country was against it. This attitude also caused a split in the party, the conservative element becoming known as the Right Socialists Revolutionists, while the more revolutionary faction called itself Left Socialists Revolutionists. The latter, led by Maria Spiridonova, who had suffered many years of Siberian imprisonment under the Tsar, advocated the termination of the war and secured a very considerable following, particularly among the poorer agricultural classes.

The most radical element in Russia were the Anarchists, who demanded immediate peace, free land for the peasant, and the socialization of the means of production and distribution. They wanted the abolition of capitalism and wage slavery, equal rights for all and special privileges to none. The land, the factories and mills, the machinery of produc-

tion and the means of distribution were to become the possession of the whole people. Each able person was to work according to his ability and receive according to his needs. There was to be full liberty for every one and joint use on the basis of mutual interests. The Anarchists warned the proletariat against delegating power to any government or placing a political party in authority. Government of any kind, they said, would stifle the Revolution and rob the workers of the results already achieved. The life and welfare of a country depended on economics, not on politics, they argued. That is, what people want is to live, to work and satisfy their needs. For this, sensible management of industry is necessary, not politics. Politics, they insisted, is a game to rule and govern men, not to help them live. In short, the Anarchists advised the toilers to permit no one to become their master again, to abolish political government, and to manage their agrarian, industrial, and social affairs for the good of all instead of for the benefit of rulers and exploiters. They called upon the masses to stand by their Soviets and look after their interests by means of their own organizations.

The Anarchists were, however, comparatively small in numbers. As the most advanced and revolutionary element they had been persecuted by the Tsarist régime even worse than the Socialists. Many of them had been executed, others imprisoned and their organizations suppressed as illegal. It was most dangerous to belong to the Anarchists, and their work of education was exceedingly difficult. Therefore, the Anarchists were not strong and could not exert much influence upon the people at large in a vast country of 120 millions of population.

But they had a great advantage in that their idea appealed to the healthy instincts and sound sense of the masses. To the extent of their ability and limited power the Anarchists encouraged the demand for peace, land, and bread, and actively helped carry out those demands by direct expropriation and the formation of a free communal life.

There was another political party in Russia which was far more numerous and better organized than the Anarchists. That party realized the value of the Anarchist ideas and set to work to carry them out.

It was the Bolsheviki.

THE BOLSHEVIKI

WHO were the Bolsheviki, and what did they want?

Up to the year 1903, the Bolsheviki were members of the Russian Socialist Party; that is, Social Democrats, followers of Karl Marx and his teachings. In that year the Social Democratic Labor Party of Russia split on the question of organization and other minor matters. Under the leadership of Lenin the opposition formed a new party, which called itself Bolshevik. The old party became known as Menshevik.*

The Bolsheviki were more revolutionary than the mother party from which they seceded. When the world war broke out they did not betray the cause of the workers and join the patriotic jingoes, as did the majority of the other Socialist parties. To their credit be it said that, like most of the Anarchists and Left Socialists Revolutionists, the Bolsheviki opposed the war on the ground that the proletariat had no interest in the quarrels of conflicting capitalist groups. When the February Revolution began the Bolsheviki realized that political changes alone would do no good, would not solve the labor and social problems. They knew that putting one government in place of another would not help matters. What was needed was a radical, fundamental change.

Though Marxists like their Menshevik step-brothers (believers in the theories of Karl Marx), the Bolsheviki did not agree with the Mensheviki in their attitude to the great upheaval. They scorned the idea that Russia could not have a proletarian revolution because capitalist industry had not developed there to its fullest possibilities. They realized that

* From the Russian word *bolshe*, meaning "more" or majority; *menshe* signifying "less."

it was not merely a bourgeois political change that was taking place. They knew that the people were not satisfied with the abolition of the Tsar and not content with a constitution. They saw that things were developing further. They understood that the taking of the land by the peasantry and the growing expropriation of the possessing classes did not signify "reform." Closer to the masses than the Mensheviki, the Bolsheviki felt the popular pulse and more correctly judged the spirit and purpose of the tremendous events. It was foremost of all Lenin, the Bolshevik leader, who believed that the time was approaching when he and his Party might grasp the reins of government and establish Socialism on the Bolshevik plan.

Bolshevik Socialism meant the seizing of political power by the Bolsheviki in the name of the proletariat. They agreed with the Anarchists that Communism would be the best economic system; that is, the land, the machinery of production and distribution, and all public utilities should be owned in common, excluding private possession in those things. But while the Anarchists wanted the people as a whole to be the owners, the Bolsheviki held that everything must be in the hands of the State, which meant that the government would not only be the political ruler of the country but also its industrial and economic master. The Bolsheviki as Marxists believed in a strong government to run the country, with absolute power over the lives and fortunes of the people. In other words, the Bolshevik idea was a dictatorship, that dictatorship to be in the hands of themselves, of *their* political Party.

They called such an arrangement the "dictatorship of the proletariat," because their Party, they said, represented the best and foremost element, the advance guard of the working class, and their Party should therefore be dictator in the name of the proletariat.

The great difference between the Anarchists and the Bolsheviki was that the Anarchists wanted the masses to decide and manage their affairs for themselves, through their own

organizations, without orders from any political party. They wanted real liberty and voluntary coöperation in joint ownership. The Anarchists therefore called themselves *free* Communists, or Communist Anarchists, while the Bolsheviki were *compulsory*, governmental or State Communists. The Anarchists didn't want any State to dictate to the people, because such dictation, they argued, always means tyranny and oppression. The Bolsheviki, on the other hand, while repudiating the capitalist State and bourgeois dictatorship, wanted the State and the dictatorship to be *theirs*, of their Party.

You can therefore see that there is all the difference in the world between the Anarchists and the Bolsheviki. The Anarchists are opposed to all government; the Bolsheviki are strong for government on condition that it is in their hands. "They are not against the big stick," as a clever friend of mine is wont to say; "they only want to be at the right end of it."

But the Bolsheviki realized that the views and methods advocated by the Anarchists were sound and practical, and that only such methods could assure the success of the Revolution. They decided to make use of Anarchist ideas for their own purposes. So it happened that although the Anarchists were themselves too weak in numbers to reach the masses, they succeeded in influencing the Bolsheviki, who presently began to advocate Anarchist methods and tactics, pretending of course that they were their own.

But they were not their own. You might say that it does not matter who advocates or helps to carry out an idea that will benefit the people. But if you think it over a bit you will realize that it matters very much, as all history and particularly the Russian Revolution proves.

It matters because everything depends on the *motives*, on the purpose and spirit in which a thing is carried out. Even the best idea can be applied in such a manner as to bring much harm. Because the masses, fired by the great idea, may fail to notice *how*, in what manner, and by what means it is

being carried out. But if carried out in the wrong spirit or by false means, even the noblest and finest idea can be turned to the ruin of the country and its people.

That is just what happened in Russia. The Bolsheviki advocated and partly carried out Anarchist ideas, but the Bolsheviki were not Anarchists and they did not at heart believe in those ideas. They used them for their own purposes—purposes that were *not* Anarchistic, that were really anti-Anarchistic, against the Anarchist idea. What were those Bolshevik purposes?

The Anarchist idea was to do away with oppression of every kind, to abolish the rule of one class over another, to substitute the management of things for the mastery of man over man, to secure liberty and well-being for all. Anarchist methods were calculated to bring about such a result.

The Bolsheviki used the Anarchist methods for an entirely different purpose. They did not want to abolish political domination and government: they only meant to get it into their own hands. Their object was, as already explained, to gain control of political power by their Party and establish a Bolshevik dictatorship. It is necessary to get this very clearly in order to understand what happened in the Russian Revolution and why "proletarian dictatorship" quickly became a Bolshevik dictatorship *over* the proletariat.

It was soon after the February Revolution that the Bolsheviki began to proclaim Anarchist principles and tactics. Among these were "direct action," "the general strike," "expropriation," and similar modes of action by the masses. As I have said, the Bolsheviki as Marxists did not believe in such methods. At least they had not believed in them until the Revolution. For years previously Socialists everywhere, including the Bolsheviki, had ridiculed the Anarchist advocacy of the general strike as the strongest weapon of the workers in their struggle against capitalist exploitation and government oppression. "The general strike is general nonsense," was the war cry of Socialists against the Anarchists. Socialists

did not want the workers to resort to direct mass action and the general strike, because it might lead to revolution and the taking of things into their own hands. The Socialists wanted no independent revolutionary action by the masses. They advocated political activity. They wanted the workers to put them, the Socialists, in power, so *they* could do the revolutionizing.

If you glance over the Socialist writings for the past forty years, you will be convinced that Socialists were always against the general strike and direct action, as they were also opposed to expropriation and revolutionary syndicalism, which is another name for workers' soviets. Socialist congresses passed drastic resolutions against, and Socialist agitators fiercely denounced, all such revolutionary tactics.

But the Bolsheviki accepted these Anarchist methods and began advocating them with new-born conviction. Not, of course, at the outbreak of the Revolution, in February, 1917. They did it much later, when they saw that the masses were not content with mere political changes and were demanding bread instead of a constitution. The swiftly moving events of the Revolution *compelled* the Bolsheviki to fall in line with the most radical popular aspirations in order not to be left behind by the Revolution, as happened to the Mensheviki, to the Right Socialists Revolutionists, the Constitutional Democrats, and to other reformers.

Very sudden was this Bolshevik acceptance of Anarchist methods, because only a short time before they had been insistently calling for the Constituent Assembly. For months following the February Revolution they were demanding the convocation of a representative body to determine the form of government that Russia was to have. It was right for the Bolsheviki to favor the Constituent Assembly, since they were Marxists and pretended to believe in majority rule. The Constituent Assembly was to be elected by the entire people, and the majority in the Assembly was to decide matters. But the real reason why the Bolsheviki agitated for the Assembly was that they believed the masses were with them

and that they, the Bolshevik Party, would be sure of a majority in the Assembly. Presently, however, it became clear that they would prove an insignificant minority in that body. Their hope to dominate it vanished. As good governmentalists and believers in majority rule they should have bowed to the will of the people. But that did not suit the plans of Lenin and his friends. They looked about for other ways of getting control of the government, and their first step was to begin a vehement agitation *against* the Constituent Assembly.

To be sure, the Assembly could give nothing of value to the country. It was a mere talking machine, lacking all vitality, and unable to accomplish any constructive work. The Revolution was a fact outside and independent of the Constituent Assembly, independent of any legislative or governmental body. It began and was developing in spite of government and constitution, in spite of all opposition, in defiance of law. In its entire character it was unlawful, non-governmental, even anti-governmental. The Revolution followed the healthy natural impulses of the people, their needs and aspirations. In the truest sense it was Anarchistic in spirit and deed. Only the Anarchists, those governmental heretics who believe in liberty and popular initiative as the cure for social ills, welcomed the Revolution as it was and worked for its further growth and deepening, so as to bring the entire life of the country within the sphere of its influence.

All the other parties, including the Bolsheviki, had the sole object of lassoing the revolutionary movement and tying it to their particular band-wagon. The Bolsheviki needed the support of the masses to wrest political power for their Party and to proclaim the Communist dictatorship. Seeing that there was no hope of accomplishing this through the Constituent Assembly, they turned against it, joined the Anarchists in condemning it, and later forcibly dispersed it. But you can see that while the Anarchists could do this honestly, in keeping with their no-government ideas, similar

action on the part of the Bolsheviki was rank hypocrisy and political trickery.

Together with their opposition to the Constituent Assembly the Bolsheviki borrowed from the Anarchist arsenal a number of other militant tactics. Thus they proclaimed the great war cry, "All power to the Soviets," advised the workers to ignore and even defy the Provisional Government, and to resort to direct mass action to carry out their demands. At the same time they also adopted the Anarchist methods of the general strike and energetically agitated for the "expropriation of the expropriators."

It is important to keep in mind that these tactics of the Bolsheviki were not, as I have already pointed out, the logical outcome of their ideas, but only a means of gaining the confidence of the masses with the object of achieving political domination. Indeed, those methods were really *opposed* to Marxist theories and were not believed in by the Bolsheviki. It was therefore not surprising that, once in power, they repudiated all those anti-Marxist ideas and tactics.

The Anarchist mottoes proclaimed by the Bolsheviki did not fail to bring results. The masses rallied to their flag. From a Party with almost no influence, with its main leaders, Lenin and Zinoviev, discredited * and hiding, with Trotsky and others in prison, they quickly became the most important factor in the movement of the revolutionary proletariat.

Attentive to the demands of the masses, particularly of the soldiers and workers, voicing their needs with energy and persistence, the Bolsheviki constantly gained greater influence among the people and in the Soviets, especially in those of Petrograd and Moscow. The inactivity of the Provisional Government and its failure to undertake any important changes aggravated the general dissatisfaction and resentment, which were soon to break into fury. The pusillanimous character of the Kerensky régime served to strengthen the hands of the Bolsheviki in the Soviets. Daily the rupture between

* Because of the widely believed but false charge against Lenin of being in the pay of Germany.

the latter and the Government grew, presently developing into open antagonism and struggle.

The evident helplessness of the government, the decision of Kerensky to renew an aggressive movement at the front, together with the reintroduction of the death penalty for military desertion, the persecution of the revolutionary elements and the arrest of their leaders, all hastened the crisis. On July 3, 1917,* thousands of armed workers, soldiers, and sailors demonstrated in the streets of Petrograd in spite of government prohibition, demanding "All power to the Soviets." Kerensky sought to suppress the popular movement. He even recalled "trusted" regiments from the front to teach the proletariat of Petrograd a "salutary lesson." But in vain were all the efforts of the bourgeoisie, represented by Kerensky, by the Social Democratic leaders and Right Socialists Revolutionists, to stem the rising tide. The July demonstrations were suppressed, but within a short time the revolutionary movement swept the Provisional Government away. The Petrograd Soviet of soldiers and workers declared the government abolished, and Kerensky saved his life only by fleeing in disguise.

The masses backed the Petrograd Soviet. The example of the capital was soon followed by Moscow, thence spreading throughout the country.

It was on October 25th † that the Provisional Government was declared abolished, its members arrested, and the Winter Palace taken by the military-revolutionary committee of the Petrograd Soviet. On the same day the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets opened its sessions. Political government was practically abolished in Russia. All power was now in the hands of the workers, soldiers, and peasants represented in the Congress. The latter immediately began to consider steps to carry out the will of the masses: to terminate the war, secure land for the peasants, the industries for the workers, and establish liberty and welfare for all.

* July 16, new style.
† November 7, new style.

This was the status of the Russian Revolution in October, 1917. Beginning with the abolition of the Tsar, it gradually widened and developed into a thorough industrial and economic reorganization of the country. The spirit of the people and their needs marked out the further progress of the Revolution toward the rebuilding of life on the foundation of political freedom, economic equality, and social justice.

This could be accomplished only as the previous great changes, from February to October, had been; by the joint effort and free coöperation of the workers and peasants, the latter now joined by the bulk of the army.

But such a development did not come within the scheme of the Bolsheviki. As already explained, their aim was to establish a dictatorship wielded by their Party. But a dictatorship means dictation, the imposing of the ruler's will upon the country. The Bolsheviki now felt themselves strong enough to carry out their real object. They dropped the revolutionary and Anarchist mottoes. There must be a vigorous political power, they declared, to carry on the work of the Revolution. Under the guise of protecting the people against the monarchists and the bourgeoisie they began to use repressive measures. As a matter of fact, there were no Tsarist supporters or monarchists in Russia worth mentioning. The people had grown out of Tsarism, and there was no more chance whatever, for a monarchy in Russia. As to the bourgeoisie, there had never been any organized capitalist class in Russia, such as we have in highly developed industrial countries—in the United States, England, France, and Germany. The Russian bourgeoisie was small in numbers and weak. It continued to exist after the February Revolution only by the protection of the Kerensky Government. The moment the latter was abolished, the bourgeoisie went to pieces. It had neither strength nor means to stop the confiscation of its lands and factories by the peasants and workers. Strange as it may seem, it is a fact that throughout this whole period of the Revolution the Russian bour-

geoisie did not make any organized and effectual attempt to regain its possessions.*

Consider how different it would have been in America. There the capitalists, who are strong and well organized, would have offered the greatest resistance. They would have formed defense bodies to protect themselves and their interests by force of arms. I have no doubt they will do so when things begin to happen there as they did in Russia in 1917. Not that they will succeed, however. But as I say, the Revolution in Russia did not produce any organized and effective bourgeois resistance, for the simple reason that there was no real bourgeoisie or capitalist class in that country. Military attempts there were indeed, such as that of the Tsarist General Kornilov to attack Petrograd with Cossacks brought from the front, but so harmless was that adventure that Kornilov's army melted away even before he could reach the capital. His men went over to the revolutionary garrison of Petrograd almost without firing a gun.†

The point is that when the masses are with the Revolution, there can be no thought of successful resistance by any enemy, no chance of suppressing the Revolution. That was the situation in Russia in October, 1917, when the Soviets took the power into their hands.

The Bolshevik plan was to gain entire and exclusive control of the government for their Party. It did not fit into their scheme to permit the people themselves to manage things, through their Soviet organizations. As long as the Soviets had the whole say the Bolsheviki could not achieve their purpose. It was therefore necessary either to abolish the Soviets or to gain control of them.

* In the South of Russia (the Ukraine) the bourgeoisie did offer some resistance, but only during the rule of the Hetmen Skoropadsky and Petlura, aided by the Allied armies. As soon as foreign aid was withdrawn, the Ukrainian bourgeoisie also became helpless.

† Real counter-revolution began much later, when Bolshevik terror and dictatorship were in full sway, which alienated the masses and resulted in insurrections.

To abolish the Soviets was impossible. They represented the toiling masses; the Soviet idea had been a cherished dream of the Russian people for centuries. Even in the far past Russia had soviets of various kinds, and the entire village life was built on the soviet principle; that is, on the equal right and representation of all members alike. The ancient Russian *mir,* the public assembly to transact the business of the village or town, was one of the forms of the soviet idea.

The Bolsheviki knew that the revolutionary workers and peasants, as well as the soldiers (who were workers and peasants in uniform), would not stand for the abolition of their soviets. There remained the only alternative of getting control of them. Holding to the Lenin principle that the "end justifies the means," the Bolsheviki did not shrink from any methods whatever to discredit and eliminate the other revolutionary elements from the Soviets. They carried on a persistent campaign of venom and detraction for the purpose of deluding the masses and turning them against the other parties, particularly against the Left Socialists Revolutionists and the Anarchists. Systematically and by the most Jesuitic means they sought to become the *sole* power, so as to be able to carry out Lenin's scheme of "proletarian dictatorship."

By such tactics the Bolsheviki finally succeeded in organizing a Soviet of People's Commissars, which in reality became the new government. All its members were Bolsheviki, with two minor exceptions: the Commissariats of Justice and of Agriculture were headed by Left Socialists Revolutionists. Before long these were also eliminated and replaced by Bolsheviki. The Soviet of People's Commissars was the political machine of the Bolshevik Party, which was now rechristened into the Communist Party of Russia.

What this Communist Party stood for, what its objects and purposes were, we already know. It openly avowed its determination to secure exclusive Bolshevik domination under the label of the "dictatorship of the proletariat."

This was fatal to the Revolution and its great aim of a deep social and economic reconstruction, as the subsequent history of Russia has proven.

Why?

REVOLUTION AND DICTATORSHIP

BECAUSE the Revolution and the Bolshevik dictatorship were things of an entirely different and even opposite nature. And here is where most people make the greatest mistake in confusing the Russian Revolution with the Communist Party and speaking of them as if they were one and the same, which emphatically they are not.

This will become clear to us if we compare the aims of the Revolution with the ends sought by the Bolsheviki.

The Revolution was a mighty uprising against oppression and misery. It voiced the longing of the masses for liberty and justice. It attempted to do away with everything that kept man in subjection, made him a slave and a beast of burden. The Revolution tried to establish new forms of life, conditions of real equality and brotherhood.

We have already seen that the Revolution was not a superficial change, that it did not stop with the February events. The Tsar had been abolished and the power of his autocracy broken, but the result was only another *form* of government. The economic and social conditions remained the same. Yet it was just those that the people meant to change. That is why the October Revolution took place. Its purpose was to rebuild life altogether, on new social foundations.

How was it to be rebuilt? It is evident that taking Romanov out of the Kremlin palace and putting Lenin in his place would not do it. Something more was necessary. It was necessary to give the soil to the peasant, to put the factories in the hands of the workers and their labor organizations. In short, it was the aim of October to afford the people an opportunity to make use of the political freedom won in February.

That is the way the masses sized up the situation. And they acted upon it. They began to apply liberty to their needs. They wanted peace, so they stopped the war, first of all. It was months later that the Bolshevik Government signed the Brest-Litovsk treaty and concluded an official peace with Germany. But so far as the Russian armies were concerned, war was at an end long before, without diplomatic negotiations. Trotsky frankly admits this in his work on the Revolution.*

The Russian workers and peasants, temporarily in soldiers' uniforms, had taken matters into their own hands and terminated the war by leaving the fronts.

Similarly did the peasantry and the proletariat act in solving the industrial and agrarian problems. While the Provisional Government was still discussing land reforms, the masses themselves acted, through their local councils and Soviets The peasants *took* the land they needed and began cultivating it. With simple common sense and inherent popular justice they settled the agrarian problem over which politicians and lawgivers had been breaking their heads for many decades without result. The Bolsheviki, when they came to power, "legalized" what the peasants had already accomplished without asking anybody's permission.

In like manner did the workers' Soviets start to solve the industrial problem by taking over the factories and mines and managing them for the general benefit instead of for the profit of the "owners." That was *actual* abolition of capitalism and wage slavery, long before the Bolshevik Government declared capitalist ownership "legally" at an end.

All the other problems of every-day life the Revolution was similarly solving by the practical and direct activity of the masses themselves. Coöperative organizations brought city and village together for the exchange of products; house committees looked after the housing question; street and district committees were organized for the safety of the city,

* *1917*, by Leon Trotsky. Moscow, 1925.

and other voluntary bodies were formed tor the defense of the people's interests and of the Revolution.

The requirements of the situation directed the efforts of the masses; liberty of action brought initiative into play, and the wants of the people shaped their creative capacities to the needs of the hour.

These collective activities constituted the Revolution. They were the Revolution. For "revolution" is not some vague thing without definite meaning and purpose; nor does it signify political scene shifting or new legislation. The *actual* Revolution took place neither in February nor in October, but between those months. It consisted in the free play and interplay of the revolutionary energies and efforts of the people, in independent popular initiative and creative work, inspired by common need and mutual interests.

That was the spirit and tendency of the great economic and social upheaval in Russia. It solved problems as they arose, on the basis of liberty and free coöperation.

This process of the Revolution was stopped in its development by the Communist Party seizing political power and constituting itself a new government.

We have just seen what the aim of the Revolution was; we know what the masses of Russia wanted and what means they used to achieve it.

The objects of the Bolsheviki as a political party, on the other hand, were of an entirely different nature. As frankly admitted by themselves, their immediate goal was a dictatorship; that is, the formation of a powerful Bolshevik State which should direct the life and activities of the country according to the views and theories of the Communist Party.

To give due credit to the Bolsheviki let me say right here that there never was any political party more devoted to its cause, more wholehearted in its efforts to advance it, more determined and energetic in the achievement of its purposes. But *those purposes* were entirely foreign to the Revolution and opposed to its real needs. They were, in fact, so contrary to the spirit and aims of the Revolution that their

achievement meant the destruction of the Revolution itself.

No doubt the Bolsheviki really thought that only by means of their dictatorship could Russia be converted into a Socialist paradise for the worker and farmer. Indeed, as Marxists they could not see things in any other way. Believers in an all-powerful State, they had no confidence in the people; they had no faith in the initiative and creative ability of the toilers. They distrusted them as a "multi-colored mob which has to be forced into liberty." They agreed with the cynical maxim of Rousseau that the masses "can be made free only by compulsion."

"Proletarian compulsion in all its forms," wrote Bukharin, the foremost Communist theoretician, "beginning with summary execution and ending with compulsory labor is, however paradoxical it may sound, a method of reworking the human material of the capitalistic epoch into Communist humanity."

That was the Bolshevik gospel; it was the attitude of a party that believed a revolution could be run by the orders of a Central Committee.

What followed was the logical outcome of the Bolshevik idea.

Claiming that only the dictatorship of their Party could properly conduct the Revolution, they bent all energies to secure that dictatorship. It meant that they had to take things exclusively into their own hands, to have the designs of the Party accomplished at any cost.

We need not go into the details of the schemes and political manipulations of those days which finally resulted in the Communist Party gaining the upper hand. The important point is that the Bolsheviki did contrive to carry out their plans. Within a few months after the October Revolution, by April, 1918, they were in entire control of the government.

By taking advantage of the excitement of the revolutionary days and the inevitable confusion, they exploited the situation for their own objects. They used the political differences to rouse fierce party passions, resorted to every means to de-

nounce their opponents as enemies of the people, branded them counter-revolutionists, and finally succeeded in damning them in the eyes of the workers and soldiers. Declaring that the Revolution must be protected against those alleged enemies, they were enabled to proclaim their own dictatorship. In the name of "saving the Revolution" they began eliminating all other revolutionary elements, non-Bolshevik, from positions of influence, finishing by suppressing them entirely.

It must be left to future historians to determine whether Bolshevik repression of the bourgeoisie, with which they started their rule, was not merely a means toward the ulterior purpose of suppressing all other non-Bolshevik elements. For the Russian bourgeoisie was not dangerous to the Revolution. As already explained, it was an insignificant minority, unorganized and powerless. The revolutionary elements, on the contrary, were a real obstacle to the dictatorship of any political party.

Because dictatorship would meet with the strongest opposition not from the bourgeoisie but from the truly revolutionary classes which considered dictatorship inimical to the best interests of the Revolution, the elimination of these would therefore be of prime necessity to any political party seeking dictatorship. Such a policy, however, could not successfully *begin* with the suppression of the revolutionists: it would provoke the disapproval and resistance of the workers and soldiers. It would have to be begun at the bourgeois end and means found gradually to spread the net over the other elements. Distrust and antagonism would have to be wakened, intolerance and persecution stimulated, popular fear created for the safety of the Revolution in order to secure the people's support for an ever-widening campaign of elimination and suppression, for the introduction of the bloody hand of red terror into the life of the Revolution.

But as I have said, it is the place of the future historian to determine to what extent such motives fashioned the events of those days. Here we are more concerned with what actually happened.

What happened was that before long the Bolsheviki established the exclusive dictatorship of their Party.

"What was that dictatorship," you ask, "and what did it achieve?"

THE DICTATORSHIP AT WORK

It achieved the complete mastery of the Bolsheviki over a country of 140 millions of population. In the name of the "proletarian dictatorship" *one* political organization, the Communist Party, became the absolute ruler of Russia. The proletarian dictatorship was not dictatorship by the proletariat. Millions of people cannot all be dictators. Nor can thousands of party members be dictators. By its very nature a dictatorship is limited to a small number of persons. The less of them, the stronger and more unified the dictatorship. In actual practice dictatorship is always in the hands of *one* person, the strong man whose will compels the consent of his nominal co-dictators. It cannot be otherwise, and so it was with the Bolsheviki.

The real dictator was neither the proletariat nor even the Communist Party. Theoretically the power was held by the Central Committee of the Party, but actually it was wielded by the inner circle of that Committee, called the political bureau or "politbureau." But even the politbureau was not the real dictator, though its membership was less than a score. For in the politbureau there were differing views on every important question, as there must be when there are many heads. The real dictator was the man whose influence secured the support of the majority of the politbureau. That man was Lenin, and it was he who was the real "proletarian dictatorship," just as Mussolini, for instance, and not the Fascist Party, is dictator in Italy. It was always the views and ideas of Lenin that were carried out, from the very inception of the Bolshevik Party to the last day of Lenin's life; carried out when the entire Party was opposed to his opinion and even when the Central Committee bitterly fought his proposals

on their first presentation. It was Lenin who always won, his will that prevailed. It was so in every critical period of Bolshevik history. It could not help being so, because dictatorship always means domination by the strongest personality, the supremacy of a single will.

The whole history of the Communist Party, as that of every dictatorship, indisputably demonstrates this. Bolshevik writings themselves prove it. Here it is sufficient to mention but a few of the most vital events to substantiate my contention.

In March, 1917, when Lenin returned home from exile in Switzerland, the Central Committee of his Party in Russia had decided to enter the Coalition Government formed after the abolition of the Tsarist régime. Lenin was opposed to cooperation with the bourgeois and Mensheviki who were in the Government. Yet notwithstanding that the Party had already decided the question and that Lenin was almost alone in his opposition, his influence carried. The Central Committee reversed itself and took up Lenin's position.

Later, in July, 1917, Lenin advocated an immediate revolution against the Kerensky Government. His proposal was roundly condemned even by his nearest comrades and friends as foolhardy and criminal. But again Lenin won, even at the cost of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and other influential Bolsheviki refusing to be parties to the scheme and resigning from the Central Committee. Incidentally, the *Putsch* (the attempt to upset Kerensky) proved a failure and cost many workers' lives.

The red terror instituted by Lenin as soon as he came to power after the October Revolution was bitterly denounced by his co-workers as entirely uncalled for and as a direct betrayal of the Revolution. But in spite of the official protests of the most active and influential members of the Party, Lenin had his way.*

During the Brest-Litovsk negotiations it was again Lenin

* See the official protests by Bolsheviki of long standing, such as Lodovsky and others, quoted by Trotsky in his work *1917*.

who insisted that "peace on any terms" be made with Germany, while Trotsky, Radek, and other important Bolshevik leaders opposed the Kaiser's conditions as humiliating and destructive. Once more Lenin scored.

The "new economic policy" (the "nep") submitted by Lenin to his Party during the Kronstadt events * was fought by the Central Committee as nullifying all the revolutionary achievements and as a death blow to Communism. It was indeed a complete reversal of everything the Revolution stood for and a return to the very conditions that the great October change had abolished. But Lenin's will again prevailed and his resolution was carried at the IX Communist Congress held in Moscow, in March, 1921.

As you see, the alleged dictatorship of the proletariat was only the dictatorship of Lenin. He dictated to the politbureau, the politbureau to the Central Committee, the Central Committee to the Party, the Party to the proletariat and the rest of the people. Russia counted a population of over a hundred millions; the Communist Party had less than fifty thousand members; the Central Committee consisted of several score; the politbureau numbered about a dozen; and Lenin was one. But that one was *the* proletarian dictatorship.

Russia is a country of vast extent, spread over half of Europe and a goodly part of Asia. It is peopled by numerous races and nationalities speaking different languages, with diversified psychology, varied interests and outlook upon life. We know what the dictatorship of the Tsars did to the country. Let us now see what the "proletarian" dictatorship accomplished.

To-day, after over a decade of Bolshevik rule in Russia, we can form a fair estimate of its effects and examine the results it achieved. Let us sum them up.

Politically the aim of the Revolution was to abolish governmental tyranny and oppression and make the people free. The Bolshevik Government is admittedly the worst despotism

* The revolt of the Kronstadt sailors in March, 1921. See *The Kronstadt Rebellion*, by the author.

in Europe, with the sole exception of Fascist rule in Italy. The citizen has no rights which the government feels bound to respect. The Communist Party is a political monopoly, with all the other parties and movements outlawed. Security of person and domicile is unknown. Freedom of speech and press does not exist. Even within the Party the least difference of opinion is suppressed and punished by imprisonment and exile, as witness the fate of Trotsky and his followers of the Opposition. Independent opinion is not tolerated. The *G.P.U.*, the secret service formerly called *Tcheka*, is a super-government with unlimited arbitrary powers over the liberty and lives of the people. Only those who are entirely on the side of the dominant Party clique enjoy freedom and privileges. But *such* "liberty" is to be had under the worst despotism: if you have nothing to say you are perfectly free to say it even in the land of Mussolini. As a prominent member of a recent Communist Congress put it, "There is room for all political parties in Russia: the Communist Party is in the Government, the others are in prison."

Economically it was the fundamental aim of the Revolution to abolish capitalism and establish Communism and equality.

The Bolshevik dictatorship began by instituting a system of unequal compensation and discriminating rewards, and ended by reintroducing capitalistic ownership after it had been abolished by the direct action of the industrial and agrarian proletariat. To-day Russia is a country partly State capitalistic and partly privately capitalistic.

The dictatorship and the red terror by which it was maintained proved the main factors in paralyzing the economic life of the country. High-handed Bolshevik rule antagonized the people, its depotism embittered the masses. The repression of every independent effort alienated the best elements from the Revolution and made them feel that it had become the private concern of the political Party in power. Facing a new tyranny instead of the longed-for liberty, the workers became discouraged. They felt their revolutionary

achievements taken from them and used as a weapon against themselves and their aspirations. The proletarian saw his factory committee subjected to the dictates of the Communist Party and made helpless to protect his interests as a toiler. His labor union became the mouthpiece and transmitter of Bolshevik orders, and he found himself deprived of all voice, not only in the management of industry but even in his own factory where he was kept at work long hours at the poorest pay. The toilers soon realized that the Revolution had been taken out of their hands, that their soviets had been emasculated of all power, and that the country was being ruled by some people far away in the Kremlin, just as it was in the days of the Tsars. Eliminated from revolutionary and creative activity, living only to obey the new masters, constantly harassed by Bolsheviki and Tchekists, and ever in fear of prison or execution for the least expression of protest, the worker became embittered against the Revolution. He deserted the factory and sought the village where he might be furthest removed from the dreaded rulers and at least secure of his daily bread. Thus broke down the industries of the country.

The peasant saw leather-clad and armed Communists descend upon his quiet village, despoil it of the fruit of his hard labor, and treat him with the brutality and insolence of the old Tsarist officials. He saw his Soviet dominated by some lazy, good-for-nothing village loafer calling himself Bolshevik and holding power from Moscow. He had willingly, even generously, given his wheat and corn to feed the workers and the soldiers, but he saw his provisions lie rotting at the railroad stations and in the warehouses, because the Bolsheviki could not themselves manage things and would let no one else do it. He knew that his brothers in the factory and in the army suffered for lack of food because of Communist inefficiency, bureaucracy, and corruption. He understood why more was always demanded of him. He saw his few possessions, his own family provisions, confiscated by Tchekists who often took even his last horse without

which the peasant could neither work nor live. He saw his neighbor villages, that rebelled against these outrages, leveled to the ground and the peasants whipped and shot, just as in the old days. He turned against the Revolution and in his desperation he determined to plant and sow no more than he needed for himself and family and to hide even that in the forest.

Such were the results of the dictatorship, of Lenin's military communism and Bolshevik methods. Industry stood still, and famine overwhelmed the country. The general suffering, the bitterness of the workers, and the peasant uprisings began to threaten the existence of the Bolshevik régime. To save the dictatorship Lenin decided to introduce a new economic policy, known as the "nep."

The purpose of the "nep" was to revive the economic life of the country. It was to encourage greater production by the peasantry by allowing them to sell their surplus instead of having it forcibly confiscated by the government. It was also to enable exchange of products by legalizing trade and reviving the coöperatives formerly suppressed as counter-revolutionary. But the determination of the Communist Party to hold on to its dictatorship made all these economic reforms ineffectual, because industry cannot develop under a despotic régime. Economic growth, as well as trade and commerce, requires security of person and property, a certain amount of freedom and non-interference in order to function. But dictatorship does not permit that freedom; its "guarantees" cannot inspire confidence. Hence the new economic policy has not produced the results desired, and Russia remains in the throes of poverty, constantly on the brink of economic disaster.

Industrially the dictatorship has emasculated the Revolution of its basic purpose of placing production in the hands of the proletariat and making the worker independent of economic masters. The dictatorship merely changed masters: the government has become the boss instead of the individual capitalist, though the latter is now also developing as a new

class in Russia. The toiler has remained dependent as before. In fact, more so. His labor organizations have been deprived of all power, and he has lost even the right to strike against his governmental employer. "Since the workers, as a class, wield the dictatorship," the Communists argue, "they cannot strike against themselves." Accordingly the proletarians in Russia pay themselves wages that are not sufficient for bare existence, live crowded in unhygienic quarters, work under most unsanitary conditions, endanger their health and lives because of lack of industrial precaution and safety, and arrest and imprison themselves for an expression of discontent.

Culturally the Bolshevik régime is a training school in Communism and party fanaticism, with no access to ideas differing from the views of the dominant clique. It is the rearing of an entire people in the dogmas of a political church, with no opportunity to broaden and cultivate the mind outside the circle of opinions permitted by the ruling class. No press exists in Russia except the official Communist publications and such others as are approved of by the Bolshevik censor. No public sentiment can find expression there, since the government has a monopoly of speech, press, and assembly.

It is no exaggeration to say that there is less freedom of opinion and opportunity to voice it under the Bolshevik dictatorship than there had been under the Tsars. When Russia was ruled by the Romanovs you could at least secretly issue pamphlets and books, since the government then had no monopoly of the paper supply and printing presses. These were in private hands, and the revolutionists could always find ways to use them for their propaganda.

To-day in Russia all the means of publication and distribution are in the exclusive possession of the Government, and no person can express his views to the public unless he first secures Bolshevik permission. Thousands of illegal publications had been issued by the revolutionary parties during the autocratic Romanov régime. Under Communist rule such a happening is most exceptional, as witness the indignant

amazement of the Bolsheviki when it was discovered that Trotsky had succeeded in publishing the platform of the Opposition element in the Party.

Socially Bolshevik Russia, ten years after the Revolution, is a country where no man can enjoy political security or economic independence, where the hidden hand of the *G.P.U.* is always at work, terrorizing the people by sudden night searches, arrests for no known cause, secret denunciation for alleged counter-revolution out of personal revenge, imprisonment without hearing or trial, and year-long exile to the frozen North of Siberia or the arid wastes of Western Asia. A huge prison, where equality means the fear of all alike, and "freedom" signifies unquestioning submission to the powers that be.

Morally Russia represents the struggle of the finer qualities of man against the degrading and corrupting effects of a system built on coercion and intimidation. The Revolution brought the best instincts of man to the fore: his manhood, his consciousness of human value, his love of liberty and justice. The revolutionary atmosphere inspired and cultivated these tendencies lying dormant in the people, particularly the feeling against oppression, the hunger for freedom, the spirit of mutual helpfulness and coöperation. But the dictatorship has had the effect of counteracting these traits and arousing instead fear and hatred, the spirit of intolerance and persecution. Bolshevik methods have systematically weakened the people's morale, have encouraged servility and hypocrisy, created disillusionment and distrust, and have developed an atmosphere of time-serving now dominant in Russia.

Such is the situation to-day in that unhappy land, such the effects of the Bolshevik idea that you can make a people free by compulsion, the dogma that dictatorship can lead to liberty.

"So you think that the Revolution failed because of dictatorship?" you ask. "Was not Russia too backward to make a success of it?"

It failed because of Bolshevik ideas and methods. The Russian masses were not too "backward" to abolish the Tsar,

to defeat the Provisional Government, to destroy capitalism and the wage system, to turn the land over to the peasantry and the industries to the workers. So far the Revolution was the greatest success, and the people were beginning to build their new life upon the foundation of equal liberty, opportunity, and justice. But the moment a political party usurped the reins of government and proclaimed its dictatorship, disastrous results were inevitable.

Revolution, when it comes, must deal with conditions as it finds them. It is the means and methods used, and the purpose for which they are used, that are vital. Upon them depends the course and fate of the revolution.

Whatever the social, political, or economic situation of a given country—be it "backward" Russia or "advanced" America—the most important problem is what you want to accomplish and what means will best secure your objects.

If the purpose of the Russian Revolution was to establish a dictatorship, then the Bolshevik methods were right and their success complete.

But if the aim of the Revolution was to abolish oppression and servitude, then the Bolsheviki and their policies are proving the greatest failure.

It all depends, as you see, on what your purpose is, what you want to accomplish. Your aims must determine the means. Means and aims are in reality the same: you cannot separate them. It is the means that shape your ends. The means are the seeds which bud into flower and come to fruition. The fruit will always be of the nature of the seed you planted. You can't grow a rose from a cactus seed. No more can you harvest liberty from compulsion, justice and manhood from dictatorship.

Let us learn this lesson well because the fate of revolution depends on it. "You shall reap what you sow" is the acme of all human wisdom and experience.

You cannot make a sick man well by drawing out his blood. The free activity of the masses is the life-blood of

revolution. Eliminate or repress it, and revolution becomes anæmic and dies.

It means that the aims of the revolution must fashion its methods. Not coercion and dictatorship, but only liberty and the free expression of the masses can serve the objects of revolution. In revolution, as in ordinary life, there is no middle road: it is either compulsion or liberty.

Dictatorship and terror have been tried in Russia. The lesson of that experiment is clear and convincing: those methods imply the destruction of revolution. A new way must be found.

"Is there any other way?" you ask.

There is only the way of liberty, and that has never been tried, yet.

I don't know whether you are willing to try it: most people are afraid of freedom. But I do know that unless that way is tried, the way of liberty, justice, and reason, revolution must lead to dictatorship, to failure and death.

Dictatorship, whether white or red, always means the same thing: it means compulsion, oppression, and misery. That is its character and essence. It cannot be anything else. Dictatorship is a government that governs most. But as Thomas Jefferson wisely said, "That government is best which governs least."

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